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EDITORIAL NOTES.

In Los Angeles, in San Jose, in Stockton, in Sacramento, as well as in San Francisco, there have been meetings of the local medical societies where the subject of plague was discussed. That is eminently well. There is just one way, and one only, of determining whether or not plague exists in any place; and that is by a careful inspection of all dead persons over a period of months. And this inspection must be made by one who knows. We know that plague, in the early years of an epidemic, is a very insignificant thing, so far as the number of cases is concerned. We also know that it is not difficult to eradicate, in these early years, *if we know that it exists*. How long did it exist in San Francisco before it was recognized? Nobody knows, for its discovery was almost, if not quite, accidental and it was some time before any systematic examination of the dead was enforced. We all know the history of that former epidemic; the shameful history of denial and concealment and the near approach to "shotgun quarantine." This JOURNAL, in its second number, December, 1902, in discussing this matter, said:

"The medical profession regards the subject of such vital importance to the whole country that it should be thoroughly investigated and given all the publicity possible. If there is danger of the plague spreading, it becomes the duty of medical men to warn the public and to do all in their power to stamp out the disease upon its first appearance, and not wait until it obtains a foothold and becomes too strong to cope with."

Because that was printed five years ago makes it no less true to-day. We should know, and know at once, just where the pest infection may have spread during these past years. Recently Oakland has taken up the work of inspection of the dead; and some cases have been found. Alameda and Berkeley will probably do the same thing, when they wake up. We would most respectfully but firmly urge upon Los Angeles, Sacramento, Stockton and other places to begin the same good work. There are other and smaller communities where the work is no less important, and where the expense can not be borne by the local community, it should be the duty of the state to see that the investigation is made and made properly. We can not afford *not to know* whether we are clean or not, and there is but one thing that is absolutely assured—*we do not know* whether we *are* clean or not. Let us waste no time about finding it out.

Shall we undertake to find out the extent of our infection voluntarily, or shall we wait till we are forced to do it? That is the only matter of choice, for it must be done, sooner or later. A recent news dispatch states that Seattle

has turned itself over to the supervision of the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service for the reason that cases of plague had been found in that community. There doubtless have been cases there for some time, but no careful inspection of the dead was enforced and consequently the infection has been only recently discovered. It might have been expected, for any seaport to which comes Oriental shipping—and rats—is at any time liable to infection. The Norway rat is the greatest traveler on the face of the earth; and the Norway rat has been carrying plague from country to country for a good many generations. Lloyd, in his masterly paper published in this JOURNAL, April, May and June, 1904, has given a perfect indictment of the rat; indeed we may, with a certain amount of safety, assume that plague is a disease of rats to which man, and probably some of the domestic animals, are susceptible. For years it exists in an apathetic state. In London, from 1616 to 1625 there were but a few cases annually, but in the last mentioned year the terrible devastation occurred and something like 37,000 deaths were recorded. It was nine years incubating in the city, and then—. Where pest-rats have gone, there they have carried the plague. But where have they gone? Who can say where, in our own State, for instance, they have gone and how far from the port of entry they have migrated, taking with them their mild form of plague infection? No one, for no one knows. And there is the one place where lies danger; *what we do not know*. Let us, by all means, waste no valuable time in finding out just how far this insidious infection has gone, and then let us get rid of it—as we very well can do. Two things alone are certain; where there are plague-infected rats or squirrels, there will occur occasional cases of plague in man; and where there are cases originat-

ing of plague in man, there we will find plague infected rats—or squirrels. A careful inspection of all dead, for a period of about six months, will pretty conclusively demonstrate the presence or absence of plague in any locality, and it should be done immediately in many sections of our state. The only question is whether we shall do it now, of our own volition, or wait till we are forced to do it by means that will be very unpleasant, to say the least.

Once again the JOURNAL feels called upon to emphasize the fact that all laws regulating the practice of medicine are police measures intended for the protection of the public against predatory greed and ignorance. Neither legislatures, courts nor judges are at all interested in the various schools of the art of treating the sick or injured; they can not, constitutionally, legislate in favor of any class, and medical laws are not in any particular intended to favor or protect any class or school of physicians. If they do in any way protect physicians as well as other members of the body politic, it is incidentally and not essential to their operation. That the public needs all the protection that any legislature can be induced to give, is axiomatic, with us, for we know the gullability of the average sick layman. How can he be expected to know the incurability of *tabes dorsalis*? And the blind credulity of one in the last stages of tuberculosis is not alone a matter of general knowledge, but is so well understood that it has made hundreds, if not thousands, of conscienceless sharks rich. Just as it is well to keep poisoned gumdrops from a child, so is it well to keep the foolish and credulous layman from the greedy clutches of the quack; we know it, but neither the child nor the layman can understand these things. All this is apropos of some very good resolutions recently passed by the Los Angeles County Medical Association, and published elsewhere in this number of the JOURNAL. They sound an unmistakable note of endorsement of the present law and of the work the board is attempting in the matter of the suppression of quacks and pretenders, and it would be an excellent thing for every county organization in the state to endorse these resolutions and thus record itself. And not alone must our support be moral; we must aid in beginning the work with our financial support. As already pointed out, in a previous number of the JOURNAL, the board is without funds to undertake these prosecutions, and until a sufficient number of fines have been paid, it will be without resources.

Why should we put our hands in our pockets to aid in this work? Because, incidentally, our profession benefits in reputation by the extinction of the quack. The general public's ignorance, which is appalling, does not permit it to discriminate between the competent physician and the soft-spoken, well appearing, suave and greedy quack. Any one calling himself "Doctor" will be

accepted as such by the public, and the quack passing himself off as a "Doctor"—Quaker, Indian or otherwise—brings discredit upon our whole profession by his very existence and his ignorant acceptance by the public. Of course, there will always be those who are pining for the worship of strange gods. So long as material things wear out, so long as human credulity lasts, so long as many diseases and complications remain incurable, so long as the primal instinct of superstition remains in the human mind, so long will there be those who will not believe in the verdict of the physician, but will abide in a magnificent faith that somewhere, somehow, something, will cure them. We imagine that about as long as there is any human race, there will be eddyism, or some other fool thing to take its place when eddyism shall be forgotten, and there will be venders of "patent medicines" which will appeal to a certain element as the thing desirable above medical advice. That is all right; it is human nature and in no way affects the proposition that we should do our own duty, as we see it, and help to protect the public ignorance, as far as we can, from the consequences of its abiding faith and superstition. It is right, and our duty, to do everything in our power to see that the medical law is supported and lived up to and enforced; and, incidentally, it will enhance the respect paid to our profession when the quack and the pretender shall have been driven out. It has been said that there never was a law that did not do injustice to somebody, and that is eminently true of medical laws in general. But while the occasional case of hardship should excite our compassion, it should not divert our attention from the greater good which is given to the enormously larger number of people. Our law is by no means a perfect instrument; but it is a good, safe one and should be rigidly lived up to. It is the best law we have yet had to protect the public from their folly, and it is the duty of every one of us to make it his personal business to see that the law is enforced, or know the reason why.

There was recently held, in the City of New York, the annual meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association. It was notable for the reason that at least two distinguished delegates from the American Medical Association were in attendance, and that their addresses provoked very general and very interesting discussion of the question of the relation of the pharmacist to the physician. It may be said, in passing, that the A. Ph. A. represents, more especially, the scientific side of pharmacy, whereas the National Association of Retail Druggists devotes the major portion of its energies to the "patent medicine" business, urges druggists to "boost" almost any old thing that can be sold at a profit—even "peruna"—and mixes, or did mix, unpleasantly in state politics with the purpose of annoying physicians. This last allegation was made by Dr. J. N. McCormack, in his address, and was hotly denied by several of those who subsequently discussed his remarks. It is to be re-